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Letter dated 5 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith the concept note for the Security Council open debate on regional organizations and contemporary challenges of global security, to be held on Tuesday, 18 August 2015 (see annex).

It would be appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) U. Joy **Ogwu**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

15-13245 (E) 110815

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Annex to the letter dated 5 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the maintenance of international peace and security: regional organizations and contemporary challenges of global security

Nigeria proposes to hold a thematic debate on 18 August 2015 to consider the role of regional organizations in meeting the contemporary challenges of global security.

Background

Regional organizations during the cold war generally focused their efforts on achieving closer economic integration, and matters pertaining to peace and security were largely left to the United Nations. Essentially, security arrangements aimed at proxy relationships with the two major ideological camps. This fitted well with the reality that major conflicts came from across the border, rather than within States. With the end of the cold war, however, the international arena has witnessed profound changes, whose net effect points to an enlarged space and relevance for regional organizations.

While the threat of inter-State wars diminished following the end of the cold war, internal conflicts became more pronounced and began to threaten regional peace, security and stability, as evidenced by conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Balkans, to mention a few. Other threats have since emerged, including terrorism, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, maritime threats, transnational organized crime, environmental degradation and pandemics. Such threats are, on the one hand, too broad to be contained and addressed by any one State; on the other hand, these threats cannot be adequately addressed by a single regime of international interventions and norms. Hence the increased relevance of regional organizations which feature as the bridge between national and global levels of interaction.

Changing perspectives of regional organizations

The emergence of new threats demanded new thinking, new approaches and new strategies. Regional organizations had to respond creatively and decisively to the changing dynamics in the nature of conflicts and security threats. This prompted some regional organizations to modify their outlook from purely economic integration to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and other initiatives aimed at safeguarding regional peace and security.

In the case of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the 1975 treaty establishing it was revised in 1993 to provide it with a more direct role in regional security matters. Article 4 of the 1993 treaty specifically cites the maintenance of regional peace, security and stability as one of the principles of the organization. Another significant step taken by ECOWAS towards conflict prevention was the adoption in 1999 of the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. This reinforced the emerging focus of ECOWAS on peace and security issues.

Similarly, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2001 adopted the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. This treaty builds on the 1996 decision of SADC to create an Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. Under the 2001 Protocol, the objectives of the Organ include the following:

- To prevent, contain and resolve inter- and intra-State conflict by peaceful means.
- To consider enforcement action in accordance with international law and as a matter of last resort where peaceful means have failed.

These are just two examples at the regional level in Africa. Other organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region have also been actively involved in conflict prevention and mediation. More recently, the Lake Chad Basin Commission has been coordinating the efforts of its member States (Cameroon, Chad, the Niger, Nigeria) and Benin in the fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram.

At the continental level in Africa, the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union in 2002 changed profoundly the disposition of the organization to conflict management. The Constitutive Act of the African Union, adopted on 11 July 2000, has as one of its objectives the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa. The African Union also established the Peace and Security Council to give institutional support to the maintenance of peace and security on the continent. The African Union has been a major partner of the United Nations and the European Union in the maintenance of peace and security in parts of Africa.

In Europe, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have been actively involved in issues of peace and security. While the activities of OSCE are limited to Europe, the European Union has a more global reach.

Responding to the global dynamics at the end of the cold war, OSCE in 1990 adopted the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. One of the major institutional changes arising from the Charter was the establishment of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. The mandate of the Centre includes the provision of early warning and support for confidence-building measures among the members of OSCE. OSCE has contributed significantly to conflict prevention and resolution in Europe.

The European Union is widely acknowledged as a major player in the maintenance of global peace and security. In 2001 the European Union Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts was adopted by the European Council. The programme indicates how the European Union aims to work to prevent conflicts. The European Union also established the European External Action Service which has a Unit for Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Mediation. All these underscore the great importance the European Union attaches to matters of peace and security.

While these examples are limited to Europe and Africa, it is evident that regional arrangements in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean are also playing important roles in dealing with regional security challenges. Their experiences should further inform and enrich the debate.

Regional organizations as primary stakeholders in regional peace and security

Regional organizations have deep knowledge, unique insights and strong local networks. They also have the added advantage of geographical proximity to, and deeper understanding of, conflict situations within their region. These qualities place them in a vantage position to undertake conflict management roles at the regional level.

The fact that conflicts and other threats to peace generally have a greater impact close to the source means that regional organizations are the most affected. This constrains them to act in a timely and decisive manner. Regional organizations have the greatest stake in maintaining peace and security at the level of the region.

Cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations

The drafters of the Charter of the United Nations were visionary in foreseeing a world in which the United Nations and regional organizations would work together to prevent, manage and resolve crises. Greater utilization of Chapter VIII, Regional arrangements, of the Charter has today led to a devolved United Nations-led system of global security management, where regional organizations are playing a very significant role.

The range of actors seeking to play a part in the response to global security challenges continues to expand. It has become common for the United Nations to operate alongside or in formal partnership with these international and regional players. These arrangements have worked well where the stakeholders have coordinated effectively and where they have common goals, clear comparative advantages and complementary political leverage. However, such collaboration presents its own challenges, and more remains to be done to ensure that international, regional and subregional actors coordinate their efforts better and apply lessons learned in effective burden-sharing within complex environments.

Cooperation among regional organizations

An important trend that we see today is cooperation and coordination among regional organizations in the management of conflicts and other security threats. The African Union and the European Union are cooperating within the framework of a partnership to address their common challenges in terms of peace and security. The African Union is also cooperating with various African subregional organizations to address threats to peace, security and stability in parts of the continent. As the levels of cooperation increase, more attention would need to be paid to achieving better coordination in order to consolidate the gains of cooperation.

Cooperation between regional organizations and civil society/ non-governmental organizations

When civil society and non-governmental organizations work together with regional organizations they can harness their combined strengths and capabilities to address security challenges. Civil society actors have been active in peacebuilding and other areas of conflict management. Non-governmental organizations played a laudable role in the global effort to contain the recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa. These are some of the ways by which civil society and non-governmental

organizations can have a positive influence on developments that have implications for regional peace and security. Avenues for closer cooperation between these actors and regional organizations should be explored. Success in this area would be a win-win for all concerned.

Format

The meeting will be held in an open debate format.

Issues to consider

The open debate would provide an opportunity for Council members and interested delegations to share their perspectives on the theme of the debate. Participants are invited to consider the following issues:

- The nature of contemporary challenges to global security.
- The contributions of regional and subregional organizations in meeting these challenges.
- Constraints and limitations of regional organizations and how they can be mitigated to improve effectiveness.
- The need to improve cooperation and coordination among regional organizations.
- The need to improve cooperation and coordination between regional organizations and the United Nations.
- How regional organizations can enhance cooperation and coordination with civil society and non-governmental organizations to meet contemporary challenges of global security.

Briefer

The Secretary-General will brief the Council.

Outcome

No formal Council product is envisaged. Nigeria, in its capacity as President of the Security Council, will produce a non-paper reflecting the main trends of discussion at the debate.